

QUARTERLY PROGRAMMATIC REPORT

Program Manager Spencer Shepherd
Project Manager Judith Redmond
CALFED Project # 97-N20
Quarter Ending March 31, 1999

Task 1: Plan an intensive media campaign to enlist farmers in CAFF's pesticide reduction programs and to influence other agricultural decision-makers.

Subtasks and Deliverables:

1a. Hire a Communications Director

CAFF filled the communications director position with a full-time, permanent staff person on February 1, 1999. The communications director is responsible for developing, overseeing, and implementing the outreach campaign.

Deliverable: Signed letter of hire
Percent of work completed: 100%

1b. Hire a public relations firm.

CAFF contracted with the marketing firm Sunflower Strategies to develop the media campaign.

Deliverable: Final contract
Percent of work completed: 100%

1c. Outreach strategy

The outreach strategy and workplan described in the previous quarterly report were finalized this quarter. The plan was circulated to leaders of the almond industry, including the Almond Board of California and Blue Diamond, and to the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program for comments. The response was enthusiastic, and all three organizations pledged their support and collaboration.

Deliverable: Campaign plan
Percent of work completed: 100%

1d. Create outreach materials

CAFF hired a graphic designer, Stacey Douglas-Jones of Benicia, to design a new logo for the organization, as well as a new business system (letterhead, envelopes, business cards, etc.), brochure and annual report. The logo was approved this quarter, several pieces of the business system were printed, and the brochure is in production.

Deliverable: Final contract for design services
Sample of new letterhead
Percent of work completed: 65%

Task 2: Upgrade CAFF's databases and computers

Subtasks and Deliverables:

2a. Coordinate CAFF's databases

CAFF's databases are being integrated by our staff database manager, who received advanced database training this winter. An ambitious timeline for consolidation of all CAFF databases was written in February, and the project is proceeding in a timely and efficient manner. The project will result in all our databases being relational, and will be completed by the end of April.

CAFF is hiring a consultant to upgrade our computer network, as the existing network is not powerful enough to accommodate the consolidated databases. The new network will be set up in early April, after CAFF moves its statewide office to its new location four miles west of Davis. A draft contract for the network consultant has been delivered to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and is pending authorization. Note that we have requested completion of Task 2 to be extended until the end of May. (Please refer to our letter dated March 19, 1999.)

Percent of work completed: 60%

2b. Purchase computer equipment

CAFF purchased a server and associated software to host the newly consolidated databases. We also acquired a new work station for the database manager. Note that we have requested completion of Task 2 to be extended until the end of May. (Please refer to our letter dated March 19, 1999.)

Deliverable: List of equipment purchased, with receipts

Percent of work completed: 85%

2c. Purchase computer software and hardware

CAFF purchased two computers for the Lighthouse Farm Network. One will be used by field staff and the other is for production of *The Foghorn*, the monthly newsletter of the LFN.

Deliverable: List of equipment purchased, with receipts

Percent of work completed: 100%

Task 3: Increase the capacity of the Lighthouse Farm Network (LFN) to offer consistent technical support to farmers.

Subtasks and Deliverables:

3a. Hire and train two LFN coordinators

In January, CAFF filled the second of these positions with a new staff person to work in Merced and Stanislaus counties as a regional coordinator. Among other duties, this position will provide staff coordination for LFN events in Livingston and

Modesto, where CAFF has established LFN groups. The regional coordinator has been trained by the LFN program coordinator and has already picked up her responsibilities for event planning and outreach.

Deliverable: Letter of hire
Percent of work completed: 100%

3b. Initiate and hold monthly meetings in one new location. Planning for the initial LFN meeting in San Joaquin County began in March. It will be held on April 27 in Ripon.

Percent of work completed: 10%

3c. Host meetings, field days, farm tours in Madera and Yolo-Solano counties. CAFF hosted an outdoor LFN workshop on flame cultivation of weeds in Madera on January 28, 1999. "Flaming" is used to control both weeds and insects without the use of herbicides or pesticides. Flaming is a good way to control overwintering insects that hide in tall grass around vineyard berms. One key advantage to flaming is that insects do not build up resistance. One grower at the meeting has flamed his almond orchard for three years and reported that it is a cost efficient and effective method.

The January event in Yolo County was held in Woodland on the subject of using trusts to transfer farms intact to the next generation. CAFF believes that sustainable agriculture can provide higher environmental stewardship than commercial or residential development. We are interested in helping farmers find ways to keep their land in agricultural production and not lose it to inheritance taxes, which can run as high as 50%. Agriculture and conservation easements were described at this meeting.

In February the LFN sponsored a meeting on the economics of alternative practices for farmers in Yolo County. A local walnut grower and Dr. Karen Klonsky, Cooperative Extension Specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UC Davis, were the presenters. The discussion was focused on the costs and savings associated with planting cover crops. Dr. Klonsky shared the results of her economic research on the subject and Mr. Kresa described his years of experience using cover crops as a source of fertility in his successful organic operation.

The March LFN meeting in Madera focused on the total systems approach toward pest management in agricultural systems. The presenter, a local flower farmer, speaking from his own experience and drawing on research from the USDA and the Agricultural University of the Netherlands, helped to teach growers to identify both the underlying weaknesses in the ecosystem of their farms and the practices they have been using that have allowed organisms to reach pest status. By understanding

and wisely managing all the components of the system, such as natural plant defenses, species mixtures, natural enemies and defenses found in the soil itself, the system can be "renewable and sustainable".

"Creating beneficial habitat" was the topic of the March Lighthouse field day in Yolo County. The audience included both farmers and suburban residents interested in attracting pest-controlling bats, owls, and predatory insects to their farms and gardens. Presentations were made by the local UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor, and representatives of the California Raptor Center and the Yolo County Resource Conservation District (RCD). Participants learned what plants are especially useful in a hedgerow setting to provide shelter and nectar for beneficial insects. They learned about the roles that bats and owls can play in control of codling moth and rodents, respectively. Finally, interested participants were given building plans for making an owl box to attract barn owls to their property. Creating habitat for predators is an integral part of the whole system approach to farming.

Percent of work completed: 75%

3d. Develop relationships with local leaders

In Yolo County, the CAFF regional coordinator met with each of the groups we have identified as key organizational partners. We cooperated in the planning of an April field day with UC Cooperative Extension. We found several ways to cooperate with the Yolo County RCD by sharing mailing lists and press contacts for upcoming events, and inviting the RCD to co-sponsor the March field day described above. With the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, we participated in a farmer-driven committee on minimum tillage. This group of local farmers are interested in this technique as a means to building their soil structure and reducing off-farm inputs, including pesticides.

In March, the regional coordinator of Madera registered for The Total Management Conservation Tour to be hosted in April by the Kings River RCD and the Fresno Irrigation District. The tour will begin in Fresno Irrigation District Office and continue to different farms and demonstration sites to discuss IPM techniques and measures to enhance erosion control such as cover crops, and vegetation management.

Percent of work completed: 75%

3e. Regional planning meetings

The final regional planning meeting will be held on April 12. The agenda was set this quarter, a facilitator was found, and other logistics were coordinated. All CAFF staff from the Central Valley will participate, as well as invited cooperators. The results will be submitted with the July narrative report.

Percent of work completed: 65%

3f. Monthly LFN newsletter

CAFF produced monthly issues of *The Foghorn*. This newsletter is distributed to over 900 farmers and others in the Central Valley, and 2,050 statewide.

Deliverables: *The Foghorn*, February through April, 1999

Percent of work completed: 75%

3g. Collect and analyze information

In January 1999, CAFF distributed a year-end survey to participating Lighthouse Farm Network growers to gauge the program's impact on their farming practices.

Approximately 200 growers have replied thus far. Responses are in the process of being compiled and analyzed to assess participants' pesticide use before and after engaging in the LFN and their satisfaction with the program.

Percent of work completed: 55%

Task 4: Reporting

Subtasks and Deliverables:

4a. Quarterly narrative and financial reports

Percent of work completed: 25%

4b. Bookkeeping services

Invoices through January 1999 have been submitted.

Percent of work completed: 19%

4c. Administrative upgrade

CAFF purchased and installed new bookkeeping software, Fund E-Z. Staff have been trained in using it, and are completing the transfer of our books to the new system.

Percent of work completed: 75%

Task 5: Implement Media Campaign

Subtasks and Deliverables:

5a. Implement 1999 (year one) activities of the Biological Farming Promotion Campaign

Preparations for the launch of the promotion campaign are well underway. The Creative Team, which consists of selected CAFF staff and our marketing, public relations and advertising consultants, had their first meeting on March 3. The team drafted two briefs which set the context within which the campaign messages need to work. From these ideas they sketched out ideas for the first round of print, radio, and direct mail advertisements.

The team also met on March 17 to review a draft of the campaign's first print advertisements. At that meeting the group crafted a questionnaire for use in soliciting input about the ads from farmers. CAFF staff took the advertisements to the Nut Grower Trade Show in Turlock and polled conventional farmers about their reactions to them; almost all of their comments were positive. We also had the advertisements reviewed by regulators at the Region IX U.S. EPA office.

The promotion campaign will be launched at the 1999 CAFF Farm Tour, which will showcase three orchards managed with biologically integrated methods. CAFF staff met bi-weekly in January and February, and weekly in March to plan the event. Five hundred invitations were mailed out in March.

We hired a half-time communications assistant who began work on March 1, 1999. We also hired a clipping service and set up a toll-free number for farmers to call and receive information kits about biological farming. We developed a master calendar of CAFF activities, which will be completed and installed in our new offices by April 15. This large (4' x 6') calendar will mark all program, membership, training and promotion activities for the organization. Later in the year an electronic version will be installed on our computer network so that this comprehensive look at CAFF activities will be continuously available to field staff.

Deliverables: Agenda and minutes for Creative Team meeting
Advertising creative brief
Media brief
Farm Tour invitation
Percent of work completed: 25%

5b. Implement 2000 (year two) activities of the promotion campaign

Percent of work completed: 0%

5c. Implement 2001 (first six months of year three) activities of the media campaign

Percent of work completed: 0%

Task 6: Continue to coordinate BIOS in San Joaquin, Madera and Colusa counties.

Subtasks and Deliverables:

6a. Hold frequent on-farm field days in all three counties

CAFF hosted five field days in these three counties this quarter, addressing every topic that almond growers have to address in the winter and early spring, and offering options to pesticides in each case. These included:

Event Title	Location	Date
Alternatives to Dormant Sprays	Arbuckle	January 13
Better Farming Through Pest and Disease Monitoring	Modesto	February 8
Weather or Not to Spray	Manteca	February 16
Bloom and Post-Bloom Practices	Madera	February 23
Flame Cultivation of Weeds	Madera	March 24

In sum, these field events demonstrated to farmers how a whole systems approach to almond orchard management can prevent pest outbreaks through soil building, beneficial insect habitat, and cultural practices. Winter applications of organophosphates are known to contaminate surface waters throughout the Central Valley. CAFF events give growers viable options to spraying trees during this season.

Each of the BIOS projects has a management team that works with CAFF staff to plan and coordinate local BIOS activities. Often the management teams meet after a field day to evaluate the day's event and discuss the workplan for the next month. Management team members have expertise in all aspects of biological farming techniques for almonds. Teams visit each enrolled grower twice a year, in the fall and early spring, to answer questions, amend, if needed, the customized farm plan drawn up with the grower at the time of enrollment, and assess how the BIOS approach is working on the farm. The San Joaquin and Colusa project coordinators participated in farm visits during this quarter. Two new growers were also recruited to the BIOS program in Colusa County, and were visited by the management team.

Orchard monitoring is a major component of the BIOS program. Close observation of pest and beneficial insect populations and the beginnings of disease is important for staying ahead of any potential major outbreaks. Each BIOS project has a field scout, who conducts weekly orchard monitoring in every enrolled orchard. Many growers are interested in learning more about monitoring, and join the field scout in the orchard. Field scouts look for predators, mites, pest eggs and larvae, and signs of fungal problems. They also count insects in traps and report these counts to growers.

Each year CAFF meets with entomology experts from each BIOS area to set common protocols for orchard monitoring for the year. This year's monitoring advisory session was held on February 8. Later in February CAFF staff met with the three field scouts to finalize the 1999 monitoring form and standardize the monitoring procedures.

CAFF produced and distributed the season's first issue of *Field Notes*. This monthly newsletter contains monitoring data for enrolled growers, updates on pest flights, and observations from the field scout for each BIOS project. The primary audience is enrolled growers, though others who are interested in this level of technical detail may request to be on the mailing list. About 250 people receive the newsletter each month.

We also produced the winter issue of *The BIOS Update*, the quarterly newsletter of the BIOS program, mailed to over 3,100 people who are directly involved or interested in the program. This issue included articles on improving quality in walnut orchards and the economics of biological management.

Deliverables: Calendar of BIOS activities, January - March, 1999
Field Day fliers, agendas, sign-in sheets, evaluation summaries
Management team agendas and meeting notes
Monitoring team agenda and meeting notes
BIOS Field Notes
BIOS Update

Percent of work completed: 25%

6b. Provide support for the San Joaquin walnut project funded by UC-SAREP. CAFF staff provided support for this project in several ways this quarter. The coordinator of the BIOS almond project in San Joaquin County accompanied the walnut project leader on farm visits to twelve enrolled growers' farms in February. We added the growers and pest control advisors on his mailing list to our database and will distribute our newsletters to them throughout the year. In addition, our well-trained walnut field scout, with knowledge in both project operation and orchard monitoring, was hired to be the field scout for the San Joaquin project. Rather than having that beginning project produce its own newsletter, CAFF offered to include observations from their field scout and a summary of their monitoring results in *BIOS Field Notes* for 1999. This will offer readers from both projects broader information on insect populations and pest control.

Task 7: Plan the transition of BIOS projects in Colusa, Madera, San Joaquin and Yolo/Solano counties.

Subtasks and Deliverables:

7a. Build relationships with local stakeholders in Colusa, Madera and San Joaquin Counties

CAFF is developing deeper relationships with the Colusa RCD. Chris Rose, a conservationist with expertise in cover crops, joined the Colusa BIOS project management team this year. He will be a speaker at the next field day and will update attendees on the Sand and Salt Creek Watershed Project. He is also scheduled to spend a day with the Colusa BIOS field scout to learn more about orchard monitoring.

The BIOS management team in San Joaquin met on January 29 to discuss the transition of the BIOS project and to make specific goals to chart its progress. At a follow-up meeting, held on March 19, the short term goals of transferring specific responsibilities from the BIOS staff regional coordinator to individual management team members were realized as the team began to delegate the responsibilities of securing speakers and coordinating field days for the second quarter of 1999. Management team members also began training in orchard monitoring of diseases, pests and beneficial insects to gain proficiency in conducting field monitoring independent of BIOS direction.

In Madera, local growers and other members of the BIOS management team have increasingly assumed leadership roles by acting as speakers at meetings. On the February 23 field day, the Madera County farm advisor and management team member presented natural, alternative methods for fungus control in almond orchards. Similarly, two members of the Madera management team, an almond grower and a local PCA consultant, presented a segment during the March 24 field day on flame cultivation.

7b. Plan and implement the walnut BIOS transition

The first meeting of the walnut advisory team for Yolo and Solano counties was scheduled for April, 1999. The team consists of several formerly enrolled growers and members of the former management team for the project. Ten former BIOS walnut growers are sharing with CAFF the expense of hiring a field scout to monitor their orchards for beneficial insects, pests, and disease. The field scout will provide monitoring services throughout the 1999 growing season.

In San Joaquin, the UC SAREP Biologically Integrated Farming Systems (BIFS) project has used the combined expertise of the San Joaquin BIOS management team to facilitate BIFS meetings and events. Management team members are consistently called upon to act as speakers, host field days or provide event planning and outreach assistance.

Deliverables: Roster of Advisory Team members
Percent of work completed: 20%

Projected expenses for the coming quarter:

Month 1: \$101,013 Month 2: \$71,333 Month 3: \$71,333

Total for quarter: \$243,679